The Early Church View of the Atonement
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The Early Church vs. the Modern Church
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Like many Christians, you’re probably not aware that there is a different view of the Atonement of Jesus Christ than the one that is commonly taught in most churches today. However, this modern model of the atonement is a relatively new invention. It’s a product of the Protestant Reformation, and it’s called the Penal Model of the Atonement. This is not the view of the Atonement that the early church held. They held a view of the Atonement called the Ransom (or Classic) View. The Penal Model of the Atonement sees Christ’s death as a legal transaction. It says that Christ died to satisfy or appease the wrath of God and that He demands justice; man’s sins must be paid for. It also says that Christ made this payment to God and as such, man could be reconciled to God. The Ransom View, on the other hand, sees the Atonement as encompassing much more. Under the Ransom View, the Atonement encompasses Christ’s Life, death, and Resurrection. The Ransom View was the view of the Western Church for the first 1000 years of church history, and it is still the view held by the Eastern Church today. It holds that, in the Garden, Adam and Eve had a choice regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They could choose to obey God and not eat of the tree, or they could choose to adhere to Satan’s words and eat. Well, we all know the choice they made. According to the Ransom View, when Adam and Eve decided to eat, they fell under his control. Essentially, they became slaves to his will. Since they were slaves, all of their offspring would also be born bound to the same conditions. At this point, they had no hope of escape and were condemned. By order of creation, all men were condemned to die. However, God was willing to buy back - or ransom - what was His: mankind. This ransom would require one to die in man’s place. Jesus offered to be that ransom; He offered himself to God as a sacrifice, to lay down His life in man’s place to purchase back what
had been lost. The people of Jesus’ day were familiar with this concept of ransoming someone, as the practice of kidnapping people and demanding a ransom for their freedom was very commonplace. This is how Christ’s sacrifice was understood by the early church: a heroic sacrifice, not as an animal offered in a ritualistic sacrifice at the altar. Christ’s sacrifice was a heroic sacrifice; He laid down His life for others.

There are many other aspects of the Atonement, such as Christ coming as a teacher and instructing us on how to live so that we would not fall back into Satan’s power once we’re freed. He came to fulfill the Law, preach the Kingdom of God, and destroy the works of the Devil, among many other things. Let’s look at a few views from writers of the early church.

**What did the Ante-Nicene Church say?**

**Ignatius,** c.105 The Martyrdom of Ignatius Chapter 2
He was a disciple of the Apostle John.

*Trajan said, “Do you mean Him who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?” Ignatius replied, “I mean Him who crucified my sin, with him who was the inventor of it, and who has condemned [and cast down] all the deceit and malice of the devil under the feet of those who carry Him in their heart.”*

**Irenaeus,** c. 180 Against Heresies, Book 3 Chapter 23
He was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John.

*For at the first Adam became a vessel in his (Satan’s) possession, whom he did also hold under his power, that is, by bringing sin on him iniquitously, and under colour of immortality entailing death upon him. For, while promising that they should be as gods, which was in no way possible for him to be, he wrought death in them: wherefore he who*
had led man captive, was justly

Irenaeus c. 180 Against Heresies, Book 4, Chapter 24

As I have pointed out in the preceding book, the apostle did, in the first place, instruct the Gentiles to depart from the superstition of idols, and to worship one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and the Framer of the whole creation; and that His Son was His Word, by whom He founded all things; and that He, in the last times, was made a man among men; that He reformed the human race, but destroyed and conquered the enemy of man, and gave to His handiwork victory against the adversary.

Irenaeus, c.180 Against Heresies, Book 5, Chapter 1

And since the apostasy tyrannized over us unjustly, and, though we were by nature the property of the omnipotent God, alienated us contrary to nature, rendering us its own disciples, the Word of God, powerful in all things, and not defective with regard to His own justice, did righteously turn against that apostasy, and redeem from it His own property, not by violent means, as the [apostasy] had obtained dominion over us at the beginning, when it insatiably snatched away what was not its own, but by means of persuasion, as became a God of counsel, who does not use violent means to obtain what He desires; so that neither should justice be infringed upon, nor the ancient handiwork of God go to destruction.

Milito, c.170 The Philosopher Chapter 2

The whole creation, I say, was astonished; but, when our Lord arose from the place of the dead, and trampled death under foot, and bound the strong one, and set man free, then did the whole creation see
clearly that for man’s sake the Judge was condemned, captured in his turn by God; but man, who had been led captive, was loosed from the bonds of condemnation.

Tertullian, c. 197 First Apology Chapter 2

We, therefore, who in our knowledge of the Lord have obtained some knowledge also of His foe—who, in our discovery of the Creator, have at the same time laid hands upon the great corrupter, ought neither to wonder nor to doubt that, as the prowess of the corrupting and God-opposing angel overthrew in the beginning the virtue of man, the work and image of God, the possessor of the world, so he has entirely changed man’s nature—created, like his own, for perfect sinlessness—into his own state of wicked enmity against his Maker, that in the very thing whose gift to man, but not to him, had grieved him, he might make man guilty in God’s eyes, and set up his own supremacy.

Origen, c.228 Commentary on the Gospel of John Book 1 Chapter 39

But Christ is our redemption because we had become prisoners and needed ransoming.

Origen, c.228 Commentary on the Gospel of John Book 6 Chapter 35

This slain lamb has been made, according to certain hidden reasons, a purification of the whole world, for which, according to the Father’s love to man, He submitted to death, purchasing us back by His own blood from him who had got us into his power, sold under sin.

Cyprian, c.250 The Treatises of Cyprian, Treatise 8

But, moreover, what is that providence, and how great the clemency, that by a plan of salvation it is provided for us, that more abundant
care should be taken for preserving man after he is already redeemed!
For when the Lord at His advent had cured those wounds which Adam
had borne, and had healed the old poisons of the serpent, He gave a
law to the sound man and bade him sin no more, lest a worse thing
should befall the sinner.

**Methodius**, c 290 The Banquet of the ten Virgins Discourse 3 Chapter 6

*For with this purpose the Word assumed the nature of man, that,
having overcome the serpent, He might by Himself destroy the
condemnation which had come into being along with man’s ruin. For it
was fitting that the Evil One should be overcome by no other, but by
him whom he had deceived, and whom he was boasting that he held in
subjection, because no otherwise was it possible that sin and
condemnation should be destroyed, unless that same man on whose
account it had been said, “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shall
return,” (Gen. 3:19) should be created anew, and undo the sentence
which for his sake had gone forth on all, that “as in Adam” at first “all
die, even so” again “in Christ,” who assumed the nature and position
of Adam, should “all be made alive.” (1 Cor. 15:22)*

These are just a few quotes from the Ante-Nicene writers.

This article will deal primarily with issues that relate to the Satisfaction/
Penal and the Classic/Ransom models of the Atonement.

The Satisfaction and Penal Models, while simple and easily understood,
fall woefully short in explaining the Atonement. It can also be argued that
they cannot be supported very well from the Scriptures. For instance, the
major claim of the Penal Model of the Atonement says that Christ died to
satisfy the wrath of God. Yet, nothing to that effect can be found in the
Scriptures. The Penal Model is actually just a revamping of the Satisfaction Model, so let’s begin by looking at the Satisfaction Model.

The Satisfaction Model came into being around the 11th century from the Catholic Theologian Anselm of Canterbury. Not liking the historically held Classic View, he introduced his Satisfaction Model of the Atonement. The idea is that man, in the Garden of Eden, offended God’s holiness when he sinned. Under this idea, God demands justice, but because the offense was so great, man is unable to meet the demands necessary to make amends. Since man had offended God, it must be man who satisfies this demand for justice. Christ being divine meets the demand that man cannot. So, Christ coming as a man not only is able to satisfy the demand for justice but is also divine enough to provide the required payment.

The Penal Model of the Atonement is basically a modification of Anselm’s Satisfaction Model. During the Reformation, the Reformers took Anselm’s Satisfaction Theory that they had grown up with and tweaked it into what is now known as the Penal Model. While Anselm’s Satisfaction Model said that man had offended God’s honor, the Penal Model sees Christ’s death as appeasing the wrath of God. An exchange or substitution was necessary, and Christ died in the place of the sinner, paying the debt owed to God.

Notice that in both the Satisfaction and Penal Models, restitution must be made. The difference between the Satisfaction and Penal Models is that the Satisfaction Model says that God’s honor has been offended by man’s sins, but the Penal Model says that man owes God a debt for his sin. However, both say that man must make restitution to God for his sins. Since man cannot do so, Christ did so in his place.

The first problem with this is that the Scriptures don’t speak of God requiring any kind of payment for sins. The Scriptures simply say God will forgive sins.

The second problem with these models is that they do not allow God to
forgive sins. Both of these models say that man owes God. If man pays God what is owed Him, what is there to forgive? Let’s examine it from a simpler, more recognizable standpoint. If one is owed $100, there are two ways to reconcile the debt. Either one is paid the $100, in which case the debt is paid and there is nothing for one to forgive, or one forgives the debt, and it has not been paid. Now, let’s apply that same logic to the Atonement. If Christ paid the debt for man, then there is nothing for God to forgive; the debt has been paid, and man’s obligation to God has been met. Payment and forgiveness of the same debt are mutually exclusive.

The Scriptures say that Christ died as a ransom. The Penal Model says this ransom was paid to God. However, this isn’t logical. Under the Penal Model, God is being paid the ransom to buy back what He already has. The Penal Model has God kidnapping mankind from Himself and then, once again, demanding a ransom from Himself. It should be obvious that a person doesn’t pay a ransom to themselves but, rather, to the kidnapper. There’s no way to make sense of Christ dying as a ransom under the Penal Model of the Atonement.

Another thing to consider is how the Penal Model portrays God. Imagine if a father has two sons and one of those sons disobeys. Now, imagine that son pleads with the father for forgiveness and the father says, “No, I can’t forgive you; justice must be served. However, if your brother will take your punishment, then you can go free.” Would anyone praise that father? After all, he had it in his power to forgive the son, yet rather than do so, he demanded that the other son be punished in place of the first. Is that a loving Father? Is that worthy of praise? Yet, that is what many Christians claim of God.

There are other problems, but these are the some most glaring issues with these models.

But what do the Scriptures say?
Scriptural support for the Ransom view of the Atonement is strong, unlike the Penal and Satisfaction Models, which are shaky at best. In order to support the Satisfaction and Penal Views of the Atonement from Scripture, one must infer quite a bit. Let’s look at the Ransom View. The main idea in this model is that Christ redeemed or ransomed mankind from sin, death, and the Devil.

Acts 26:12-19 (KJV) Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

In this passage, Jesus says that He called Paul to turn the people from the power of darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. That’s a pretty clear and straightforward statement. Similar words are found from Paul in Colossians 1.

Colossians 1:12-14 (KJV) Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:
Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Notice also in this passage that there is forgiveness of and not payment for sins. The inheritance is also mentioned here, which is not received until the people are turned from the power of Satan.

The Penal Model of the Atonement does not even address the issue of Satan, yet Jesus said that those of faith do not even have the forgiveness (not payment) of sins until after they are translated out of the power of Satan. John says the same thing in 1 John.

1 John 3:8 (KJV) He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Again, Paul says:

Colossians 2:14-15 (KJV) Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Here, Paul says that Christ fulfilled the law and spoiled the works of the devil.

Also, consider Peter's words:

Acts 10:38 (KJV) How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.
Finally, let’s look at the words of the writer of Hebrews:

*Hebrews 2:14-15 ( KJV )* Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; *that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;* And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

The Penal Model does not deal with this at all. There are several passages that speak of Christ coming to destroy the works of the Devil. The Ransom View deals with all of this and more. It is comprehensive and explains much more about why Christ came. Considering that the Devil is man’s adversary and the Scriptures warn to be on guard against him, it’s amazing that the Penal model makes no mention of the Devil, but instead wants to rescue man from God.

Let’s look at the Satisfaction and Penal models of the Atonement, primarily the Penal model because it is the more prevalent of the two. In the Penal Model, there are two similar ideas: one, the death of Christ appeased the wrath of God, and two, that Christ’s death paid the sin debt owed to God by man.

Let’s begin with the first one, since it seems to have stronger Scriptural support. Does Scripture support the idea that Christ’s death was to appease the wrath of God? There is this passage in Romans.

*Romans 1:18 ( KJV )* For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Does this passage say that Christ’s death appeased the wrath of God?
Actually, it doesn’t. Upon closer examination, it can be seen that the passage actually says the wrath of God is revealed against those who hold the truth in unrighteousness. This passage speaks of those holding God’s word in unrighteousness. In context, Paul says that though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God. They held the truth in unrighteousness.

Did Christ’s death appease the wrath of God? If it did, wouldn’t that mean that God’s wrath has been appeased towards all men? After all, Scripture does say:

*Hebrews 2:9 (KJV)*  But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he *by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

Why, then, is God still upset with those who hold the truth in unrighteousness if His wrath has been appeased?

What about the idea that Christ’s death was a payment to God for sins? Well, there doesn’t seem to be any Scripture that supports that idea. As stated earlier, much of the support for these ideas must be inferred from Scripture because they are not explicitly stated. Therefore, there is not much to post in defense of this teaching. However, there is this parable of Jesus that deals with debt owed to the King.

*Matthew 18:23-35 (KJV)*

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying,
Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

In this parable, the king simply forgave the debt; he didn’t require it from a third party. Jesus said this is how the Kingdom of Heaven is.

The evidence is quite convincing. Look how many passages indicate that Christ redeemed mankind from the power of darkness, while support the Satisfaction and Penal models is inferred. The Satisfaction model wasn’t mentioned above but the same arguments can be made against it, there just doesn’t seem to be much Scriptural support for it.

**But Doesn’t Scripture Say that Jesus was a Sacrifice for Sins?**

Yes, Scripture does say that Jesus was a sacrifice for sins. The question arises as to how to understand that sacrifice? Do we understand it as an
heroic sacrifice, one in which Christ willingly relegated Himself to the position of ransom, or as a ritualistic sacrifice being offered on an alter?

*Philippians 2:5-8 (KJV)*

> Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

*Hebrews 2:9 (KJV)* But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

*John 15:12-13 (KJV)* This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Has Christ, the king of kings, not sacrificed in this? He left behind all of the glory he had with the Father, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death. If that is not a sacrifice, what it? Consider what He left behind.

*John 17:5 (KJV)* And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

This alone is a sacrifice that cannot be comprehended. He did this for God, to redeem that which was precious to the Father. Everything He did in the Atonement, He did for the Father.

*Hebrews 9:14 (KJV)*
14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Again, everything He did in the atonement was for God. Scripture says He offered Himself without spot to God. He was sinless and perfect. He lived the law perfectly.

**What about the Old Testament sacrifices?**

Don’t these point to Jesus? Yes, they do. But how? The Old Testament sacrifices were types pointing the way to Christ. Paul calls Christ “Our Passover”. In the same way that the Israelites were protected by the blood of the lamb when the Angel of Death passed over, Christians are protected by the blood of Christ. What about the bullock for a sin offering? What was this showing? It was showing that an innocent one would die for the guilty. Why did it have to be perfect and without blemish? God was giving man the best He had and wanted the same from man. What about the scapegoat in Leviticus?

*Leviticus 16:7-10 (KJV)*

> And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

One innocent goat dies for sin while the other is set free.

If this sacrifice is understood as a type of ritualistic sacrifice to appease
that wrath of God, it presents a few problems. The Scripture says that God had no pleasure in the animal sacrifices of the Israelites.

Hebrews 10:3-10 (KJV)
3But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. 4For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. 5Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. 7Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. 8Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; 9Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Isaiah 1:10-15 (KJV)
Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.
Jeremiah 6:19-20 (KJV)

Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.

These passages say God had no pleasure in the Old Testament sacrifices. He said “offering for sin thou wouldest not”. That raises an interesting question. Why would God not want animal offerings for sin, yet want His Son offered for sin?

Another interesting question that arises is this: if Christ was sacrificed on that cross and died to appease the wrath of God, wouldn’t that make Him a human sacrifice? What does God say about human sacrifices?

Ezekiel 16:20-22 (KJV)

Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, 21That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them? 22And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood.

Ezekiel 16:35-37

( KJV ) 35Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD: 36Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; 37Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all
them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

These passages are in the middle of a scathing rebuke from God to Israel; we must read the entire to get the whole picture. In it, God rebukes the Israelites for sacrificing their children to appease the gods of the heathen. Is one to believe that God says this is an abomination to Him, and then did the exact same thing that He says is an abomination?

Ezekiel 20:29-33 (KJV) 29Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day. 30Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? 31For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you. 32And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone. 33As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you:

Ezekiel 23:36-39 (KJV) 36The LORD said moreover unto me; Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations; 37That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them. 38Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. 39For
when they had slain their children to their idols, then they
came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus
have they done in the midst of mine house.

Jeremiah 19:3-6 ( KJV )
3And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and
inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever
heareth, his ears shall tingle. 4Because they have forsaken me, and
have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other
gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings
of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; 5They
have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with
fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor
spake it, neither came it into my mind: 6Therefore, behold, the
days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called
Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of
slaughter. Jeremiah

32:32-35 ( KJV )
32Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of
Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their
kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of
Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33And they have turned
unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising
up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive
instruction. 34But they set their abominations in the house,
which is called by my name, to defile it. 35And they built the
high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of
Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass
through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not,
neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

God says it is an abomination to offer their sons and daughters to idols. He says it never entered His mind. Now, consider what God said to Noah.

Genesis 22:1-2 (KJV) And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

This appears to be a human sacrifice.

Genesis 22:3-10 (KJV) And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and
Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

**Genesis 22:11-13 (KJV)**

And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

God could have very easily raised Isaac from the dead, and Abraham knew this.

**Hebrews 11:16-19 (KJV)**

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

So, why did God stop Abraham? If God had allowed Abraham to kill Isaac, this would have given the nations reason to bring a charge against God. Their claim could be that the God of Israel was no different than their gods because He accepted human sacrifice. However, God tested Abraham and at the same time, proved Himself holy and just.

Contrary to what the Penal Model of the Atonement says, it should be clear that God does not like or desire human sacrifices, especially not His
own Son. If this sacrifice is seen in the light of Jesus choosing to lay down His life and redeem that which is beloved to God, it shows how loving God is. It’s this idea of sacrifice, as opposed to an angry God seeking punishment to appease His justice, that shows a loving God. John said God is love. Jesus said, “Greater love has no man than this - that He lay down his life for his friends.” Yes, God is just, but He is also the embodiment of love. He says, “I will forgive their sins.” Jesus offered Himself to God, in that He humbled Himself, came to earth, and paved the way for mankind to be reconciled to God.

This idea of Christ’s victory over Satan is a major component in the Ransom View of the Atonement.

Another aspect of the Atonement is Christ’s resurrection. The Penal Model sees Christ’s death as accomplishing all that is necessary for salvation. Yet, the Ransom View sees Christ’s resurrection as an integral part of the Atonement. Under the Penal Model, if Christ didn’t resurrect, man would still be forgiven. However, Under the Ransom View, the Resurrection is essential as a means to enter into the Kingdom of God.

Jesus’ teachings are also a part of the Atonement. Jesus could have simply come to earth as a man and died as a ransom to redeem mankind. However, if He didn’t teach men what God expected, man would simply fall into sin again. So, His coming as a teacher to instruct man on how he is to live as a Christian is a very integral part of the Atonement.

As you can see, there are some very significant differences in these models. The evidence for the Ransom View is much stronger than the Penal View, and it is much more comprehensive than the Penal Model of the Atonement.